

BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

ACADIANS I HAVE FOUND

BY S. E. PERKINS III

There is in Riverside Park, Indianapolis, bordering the golf course and acting as a natural hazard, a piece of boggy ground about ten feet wide and one thousand feet long in which, during most of the spring, water stands. Cat-tails grow in the center and along its borders tall willow sprouts abound. This makes a rather dense thicket throughout which Red-winged Blackbirds call and chatter all spring and summer.

We were there seeking nests of fledgling Red-winged Blackbirds that we might band them. By June 22 I had banded seven baby red-wings in two nests. The nests we had found up to then had been in the tops of the willows, about eight feet up, mostly in groups of two and three. That day we found a red-wing nest only four feet up with one very young bird and one egg.

We had seen Robins in the elms bordering the boulevard nearby and thrashers and a little Green Heron nesting a short distance away at the bank of the lagoon but in this long strip of willows no bird notes were heard except the red-wings.

Finding the one nest lower than the others inspired us with a hope of finding others. We were thus engaged when we came upon a small beautifully felted nest of fibers, four feet up in the crotch of a willow stalk, so built that a shoot of sycamore sapling with its large leaves came through the same crotch almost completely hiding the nest site. The nest had four creamy eggs, speckled around the larger end with brown. We withdrew to ascertain the owners. Shortly a flycatcher appeared. Was it the Least, Yellow-bellied, or Acadian? All look very much alike as they flit about. They look alike as they sit close down on a nest.

But a little time with the books "makes a whale of a difference" in one's guesses.

The Least Flycatcher was eliminated for its eggs are white without spots. It was not the Yellow-bellied for this species builds on the ground. It did not sing; it only fussed. It was surely the Acadian or Alder. On June 25 the bird was incubating as before. When it left the nest we got photos of the nest and eggs. The measurement of the eggs could not determine which species we were observing. On June 27 the nest was as before and we still saw one bird and heard no song. The visit of June 30 found four very small birds in the nest. No parent bird was about while we made our observations. Natural growth was taking place and was the only thing noted on July 1. On the fifth of July the four fledglings were banded and photographed.

No visits were made again till the tenth when early in the morning I took a drop trap and a gathering cage and spool of string and went again to Riverside.

All four flycatchers were in the nest. While I watched, for the first time both parents came and fed. I observed that one parent went east and the other went west in the willows for food. Many visits of each confirm my idea that each in its direction would fly from the nest some thirty to fifty feet, there find moths or bugs and return by short flights to bring the food. A few times on leaving the nest the birds would come to the edge of the willow thicket opposite

the nest and fly along in the open for a distance then disappear into the brush. The parents fed alternately. Seldom were they at the nest at once.

I placed the drop trap in the open a foot or more from the thicket. Took two fledglings and placed them in the gathering cage and put it under the set drop trap. Ran my string up the hill to the boulevard near my auto. While I waited two boys came by and sat with me. Their interest in my doings was so stimulated that one remembered a nest he had seen in another part of the park and later, when he took me there, we found a quail sitting on sixteen eggs.

Ten minutes after the trap was set I caught the female parent. She was less afraid in her desire to feed her young than was her mate. It was only after I handled her that I was convinced that I had an Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*).

Our captive had its second and fourth primaries of equal length, as were the first and fifth, though shorter. The upper mandible was dark and the lower light. After banding she was photographed. She lay quietly in one's hand with closed eyes as if asleep. The Cardinal, Robin, Blue Jay, Hermit and Wood Thrushes will pose long enough to be photographed, but always with eyes wide open. I never had one of these close its eyes while being held, even for a second.

Another fifteen minutes elapsed while I watched the male Acadian fly about the trap with food. He would alight near and then fly farther away. Would light on top of the trap and try to find a way through the netting, then fly back to the willows. Just twenty minutes after the mate was caught I had the male. Both maintained silence most of the time while in our possession. They gave only a few faint squeals. In all our handling of this adult pair, if held quietly, the birds closed their eyes. A shake would cause either one to open its eyes wide and look about but each seemed at once to be re-assured of its safety and would feign sleep again. Both banded adults were turned on their backs at the same time in the hands of the two boys and the habit of each proved to be to close the eyes for the many seconds required to focus a graflex on them. We repeated five times this same stunt with always the same result. When released they went to a large maple near the swamp.

Next day when I returned both parents were feeding. Two fledglings were still in the nest. The others had taken flight. Some weeks later I gathered the nest and am now eager for another season to roll around that I may try to find these friends again. Will they come mated as they were? Will I find each parent with a new mate? Will the young come to the same locality as the parents? Only time, and in the spring, a lot of patience, can tell. If I find them I'll let you know.

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA.

WINTER NOTES ON THE BLUE JAYS. Thirty Blue Jays, more or less, have used this station during the past winter mostly to maintain their own storage supplies in tall oak trees nearby. Cats and squirrels are kept away from these trees and from the traps by the jays. From January 1 to February 15, 1925, no jays were banded, the jays already banded keeping other jays strictly away. On February 15 in an effort to get new jays to come to the traps, a week's supply of food was provided. Inside of two hours this was stored up as a reserve supply in their own feeding stations, but meanwhile two new jays had gained access